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ABSTRACT

Analyses of standardized test scores reveal that nonurban schools are not meeting the educational needs of Black and Hispanic students. While individual nonurban schools may be superior to urban schools in preparing the majority of their students to perform well on state standardized tests, the standardized test scores of nonurban minority group students are significantly lower than those of nonurban White students. Minority group students in suburban and rural schools are similar to their urban counterparts in how they are influenced by cultural values, the way they develop self-esteem and locus of control, and the way they process information. However, nonurban minority group students, unlike their urban peers, encounter a school environment where the culture, values, and attitudes of most of their classmates and teachers may be radically different from their own. As a result, minority group students resist engagement in academic activities, attach less value to education than their White peers, and achieve academically at a lower rate than White students. Nonurban schools need to develop strategies that sensitize teachers to the cultural, psychological, and cognitive styles of minority group students and implement programs such as The Efficacy Committee, Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS), and Foundations for Learning. Statistical data are presented in three tables. A 53-item bibliography is appended. (FMW)

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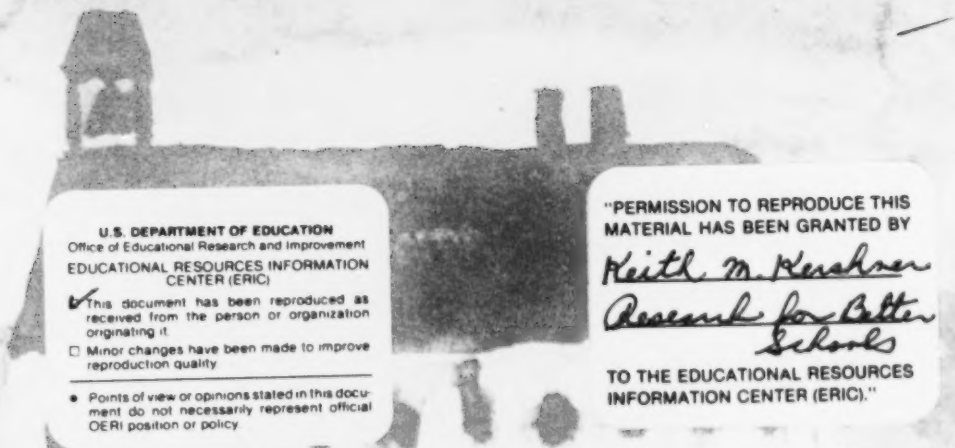

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THE EDUCATION OF MINORITY STUDENTS IN NON-URBAN SCHOOLS

Introduction

A national report on the status of American schools concluded that the quality of our educational system has put our nation at risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Educational indicators of this risk include an increased number of functionally illiterate teenagers and adults; a decline in standardized test scores; an increased emphasis on remedial education by colleges, the military, and business; and the large number of teenagers lacking higher-order thinking skills.

Overall, most of the attention given to the failure of our nation's schools to meet the educational needs of their students has focused on urban areas, where those in need are frequently in the majority. The severity of the urban problem is reflected by student drop-out rates that approach 50 percent and a student population with over half needing some level of remediation (Valdivieso, 1985).

While the need to focus on the educational problems of urban schools has been widely accepted, there has been some recent interest in the educational problems of non-urban schools. Although there is less awareness of the non-urban problem, it presents a very real and widespread challenge. For example, in Pennsylvania and New Jersey, while the percentage is less, the actual number of students in non-urban schools needing remediation is comparable to those in urban schools. Tables 1 and 2 illustrate this point using the 1986 Test of Essential Learning and Literacy Skills (TELLS) data for Pennsylvania and the 1986 High School Proficiency Test (HSPT) data for New Jersey.

Table 1

TELLS Data: Pennsylvania 1985-1986

		Urban	Suburban/Rural	Total
Districts*		18 (4%)	482 (96%)	500
Students Tested**				
3rd grade	reading	21,510 (21%)	82,308 (79%)	103,818
	math	21,492 (21%)	82,263 (79%)	103,755
5th grade	reading	19,839 (19%)	82,238 (81%)	102,077
	math	19,843 (19%)	82,258 (81%)	102,101
8th grade	reading	21,143 (18%)	95,118 (82%)	116,261
	math	21,048 (18%)	95,090 (82%)	116,138
Students Eligible for Remediation***				
3rd grade	reading	10,590 (49%)	14,495 (18%)	25,085
	math	8,748 (40%)	10,762 (13%)	19,501
5th grade	reading	9,471 (48%)	12,407 (15%)	21,878
	math	7,748 (39%)	11,891 (14%)	19,639
8th grade	reading	9,460 (45%)	15,786 (17%)	25,246
	math	10,229 (49%)	18,578 (20%)	28,807

* As determined by the Pennsylvania League of Urban Superintendents.

** These are "regular" students -- all students except those special education students identified on the TELLS reports as having individualized education programs and being behaviorally, physically, or emotionally handicapped.

*** Eligibility score was set at 16 or more percent below the state median percent correct.

Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education (1986).

Table 2

HSPT Data: New Jersey 1985-1986

	Urban	Suburban/Rural	Total
Districts	56 (9%)	560 (91%)	616
Students	399,489 (36%)	716,705 (64%)	1,116,194
Minority Students*	249,417 (22%)	68,812 (6%)	318,229
9th graders tested	24,300 (30%)	56,230 (70%)	80,530
9th graders below standard**	15,012 (62%)	16,013 (29%)	31,115

* Minority students include Blacks and Hispanics. Percentages are of total student population.

** Students who failed one or more parts of the HSPT exam -- mathematics, reading, or writing.

Sources: New Jersey Department of Education (1985, 1986).

New Jersey School Boards Association (1986).

A close analysis of standardized test results shows that, although individual non-urban schools may be superior to urban schools in preparing the majority of their students to perform well on state tests, non-urban schools are not meeting the needs of an increasing number of students. This is a particularly difficult challenge because these non-urban students represent less than half of the student population within any one school or district. Their performance is masked by the school or district average, and there is little public pressure to address their plight.

While non-urban school educators recognize the need to improve the performance of all of their low-achieving students, they are particularly perplexed by the pervasiveness of the poor achievement of their minority students. These students as a group: (1) fail at a rate much higher than that of their peers (Kohr, Coldiron, Skiffington, Masters & Blust, 1987), (2) resist significant engagement with academic activities (Klein, 1986), and (3) attach less value to education than their peers (Latimer, 1987).

This paper introduces some perspectives for exploring the problems of low-achieving minority students in non-urban schools. In the first section, general information about the minority population in non-urban schools is presented. The next section focuses on three factors--cultural values, self-esteem and locus of control, and intellectual development--that influence student success. The final section presents implications for educators in non-urban schools.

Non-Urban Minority Student Characteristics

Minority children in non-urban schools are primarily Black, Hispanic, and Asian. Small percentages of other nationalities are also present, depending on the geographic location of the school. In this paper, the term minority refers to students who are Black or Hispanic. Other groups are excluded because many of them are high achievers and their problems are different from those of the Black and Hispanic students.

The number and percentage of minority students in non-urban schools in each of the states in the Mid-Atlantic region are presented in Table 3.

Table 3

Minority Students in Non-Urban Schools

State	Non-Urban Districts	Minority Students	Total Students
Pennsylvania	482 (96%)	74,703 (5%)	1,415,235
New Jersey	560 (91%)	68,812 (10%)	716,705
Delaware	19 (100%)	27,699 (29%)	94,410
Maryland	22 (91%)	93,483 (20%)	469,196

The minority student population in non-urban schools is increasing. Many are part of a large number of minority families who have moved to non-urban communities in search of better housing and schools for their children. For example, 1.5 million Black families have moved to non-urban communities during the last decade. Today, Blacks constitute 6.4 percent of the suburban population (Bureau of Census, 1984). Hispanics have moved to the suburbs at a slower rate than Blacks. For example, they represent one percent of the students in non-urban schools in Pennsylvania (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1987). Their numbers are increasing, however, and they are expected to become the largest minority in America between years 2005 and 2015 (McNett, 1983).

Most minority students in non-urban schools are of low and middle socio-economic status (SES). Those of low SES have life styles and family situations much like those of their urban peers. Data from the Bureau of Census (1984) indicate that 41 percent of the Black families in America are headed by females. About one-third of these families are maintained by females who have never been married. In 1982, nearly half (47.6 percent) of Black children 18 years of age and under lived in households below the poverty line. The status of the Hispanic family is similar to that of the Black family. In 1982, for example, 45 percent of all Puerto Rican families were headed by single females and 42 percent were under the poverty level (Valdivieso, 1985)

The minority population in non-urban schools includes a significant number of students from middle class families. These students represent many of the minority families that moved to the suburbs during the last decade. The parents of middle class minority students are generally professionals and skilled laborers, who often represent the first generations of their families to complete college or some form of advanced training.

Both low SES and middle class minority students in non-urban schools are often low achievers whose academic performance fits one of two categories. There are those students who fail to meet minimum standards of performance, and there are others who reach minimum standards but perform at levels far below that of their peers in the dominant culture.

Achievement data point to a significant gap between minority students and white students. For example, minority students in the eighth grade in Delaware schools comprise 40 percent of those scoring in the first and second quartiles on the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, while comprising 29 percent of the total student enrollment in the state. White students, on the other hand,

comprise 48 percent of those scoring in the first and second quartiles, while comprising 69 percent of the student enrollment in the state (Delaware Department of Public Instruction, 1987).

Similarly, 48 percent of eighth grade minority students in non-urban schools in Pennsylvania who took the TELLS reading test were in need of remediation, while only 21 percent of the white students taking the same test were in need of remediation (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1987).

Data from national assessments of students indicate similar differences in the performance of minority and white students. For example, data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) show white students ages 9, 13, and 17 achieving 10, 13, and 8 percentage points higher in reading than their Black peers of the same ages (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 1981).

Factors that Influence Student Success

Three primary factors that may influence minority student performance in school are described in this section: cultural values, self-esteem and locus of control, and intellectual development. These factors are part of a growing body of literature (Neisser, 1986; Ogbu, 1986) that represents a departure from research linking poor achievement to genetic endowment, cultural deprivation, and home environment (Coleman, 1966; Jensen, 1969). The factors are presented and examples of their impact on the performance of minority students in a non-urban school environment are provided. The non-urban school environment is characterized by the existence of a dominant culture that is different from the culture of the minority student.

Cultural Values

The cultural values of minority students appear to be different from those of their peers in the dominant culture (Boykin, 1983). These values direct and shape many of the goals that minority students set for themselves as well as the behaviors they exhibit (Boykin, 1983; Ogbu, 1986).

Several researchers have explored the influence of culture on the achievement of minority students. Four of their theories are highlighted here. One researcher, John Ogbu (1986), cites the American caste system as a major factor in determining the aspirations and the behaviors of minorities toward academic achievement. Ogbu contends that Blacks in America have a caste-like minority status. He defines caste-like minorities as those who are incorporated into this country involuntarily and permanently and are then relegated to menial positions through legal and extra-legal devices. Membership in a caste-like minority group is often acquired at birth and retained permanently. Its members are degraded and treated by the dominant white group as inferior and are ranked lower than whites as desirable neighbors, employees, workmates, and schoolmates.

According to Ogbu, Blacks, some Hispanics, and other caste-like minorities do not accept their ascribed menial position. They reject the ideology and beliefs of the dominant group that rationalize their position. They believe that their economic, political, and social problems are due primarily to the racist "system" rather than to their own individual inadequacies. As a result, they often develop what Ogbu calls a collective institutional discrimination perspective. That is, they believe it is difficult, at best, for them to advance into the mainstream, achieve middle class positions, or generally improve their plight through individual efforts at school or by behaving like members of the dominant group.

A second view is presented by Ray Hammond and Jeff Howard, who contend that the larger society projects an attitude of Black inferiority that is internalized by many Black people. Defining society's belief as negative expectancy, Hammond and Howard (1985) state:

> Negative expectancy first tends to generate failure through its impact on behavior, and then induces the individual to blame the failure on lack of ability, rather than the actual (and correctable) problem of inadequate effort. This mis-attribution in turn becomes the basis for a new negative expectancy (p. 12).

This view suggests that many Black students see themselves as intellectually inferior when compared to the majority students and feel that they cannot compete or excel in the educational arena.

A third perspective is provided by A. Wade Boykin (1986) who believes the achievement problem of Black students results from differences between their culture and the mainstream culture. Boykin contends that there is a Black culture that has a historical foundation and an integrity of its own. This culture has nine interrelated dimensions--spirituality, harmony, movement, verve, affect, communalism, expressive individualism, oral tradition, and social time perspective--that in part make it different from the mainstream culture. Boykin believes Black students are in a triple quandary. They are part of the Euro-American cultural system, they are victimized by racial and economic oppression, and they participate in a culture that is sharply at odds with mainstream ideology. Furthermore, the mainstream and minority cultures do not simply co-exist side by side; the majority culture dominates, stifles, and conflicts with the minority culture.

While two of the studies (Boykin, Hammond and Howard) reported in this paper refer to cultural differences that influence achievement and engagement for Black students, the fourth is a study of a California high school located

in a agricultural/suburban community that reports the existence of cultural influences on engagement for Hispanic students (Matute-Bianchi, 1986). This study found that approximately half the Hispanics rejected the behavioral and normative patterns required for success. These students perceived themselves to be part of a culture that is different from the school culture. According to Matute-Bianchi, "To cross these cultural boundaries means denying one's identity as a Chicano and is viewed as incompatible with maintaining the integrity of a Chicano identity (pp. 233-255)."

The theories and studies of Ogbu, Howard and Hammond, Boykin, and Matute-Bianchi suggest that minority students in non-urban schools may be reluctant to engage in academic competition with their peers because: (1) they don't believe that their individual efforts to achieve will be rewarded by the dominant culture; (2) they believe that they are intellectually inferior to their white peers; (3) they resent and distrust the dominant culture and reject some of its values; and (4) they believe that the values of their culture are in conflict with those of the dominant culture. The theories are especially useful for determining why comments such as the following are often used to characterize the behavior or attitudes of minority students in non-urban schools:

> A black student at a high school in Virginia once told me that black kids don't do things like join the French club or play the violin. "Black kids are cool, they hang out," he said as his peers nodded in agreement. To do otherwise, it seemed, would be traitorous. The only black student on the school's crew team at the time complained that he was scorned because his interests went beyond break-dancing and basketball. This is not a conversation I enjoy reporting, but whether I like it or not, this is the world that these black kids and thousands like them live in (Latimer, 1987, pp. 4-6).

Self-Esteem and Locus of Control

A factor that appears to influence the degree of importance students attach to education and the level of their engagement in academic activities is self-esteem and locus of control. Self-esteem refers to whether a person feels competent, worthwhile, and important to him/herself. It is not directly related to academic achievement but it has an impact on the student's desire to reach intended goals (Bachman, O'Malley & Johnson, 1978). Locus of control refers to students' perception of the control they have over their own fate versus the control exercised by external forces. This variable is related to achievement (Coleman, 1966).

Several researchers have conducted studies that looked at the self-esteem of minority children. Some studies report that minority students perceive themselves as inferior (Dillard, 1983); others refute those findings (Hoelter, 1982; Bowler, Rauch & Schwarzer, 1986). The most recent of those studies (Bowler, Rauch & Schwarzer, 1986) looked at six groups of students in a multi-ethnic high school in San Francisco and concluded that Black high school students have higher self-esteem and a greater racial tolerance than students in other ethnic groups. The higher self-esteem reported for Blacks in this study and in others has been attributed to their increasing militancy, new sense of Black pride, and application of the "reflected appraisals principle," which implies that one's self-evaluation is determined in part by others. The researchers attribute their findings to that principle. They quote Hoelter (1982), who in the following statement related the "reflected appraisals principle" to the development of self-esteem in Blacks. He said:

> Assuming that blacks focus more on interpersonal relations and less on internalized standards of comparison, as compared to whites, and recognizing the potential for maximizing rewards at the interpersonal level through control and selectivity, we hypothesize that blacks maximize the rewards of their interpersonal relations more so than whites. (p. 529)

Hoelter contends that Blacks also make use of what he calls "selective credulity;" that is, those significant others perceived to provide the most favorable appraisals have a stronger influence on self-enhancement for Blacks, as compared to whites.

These explanations for the high self-esteem of Blacks may very well be a motivator for some of the attitudes and behaviors exhibited by minority students in non-urban schools. Specifically, they select values and goals that identify them with their minority peers rather than with the majority students. This may provide an answer to the reason why, "Black kids don't do things like join the French club or play the violin."

Studies conducted on the locus of control in minority students report consistently that minority students have a low internal locus of control (Coleman 1966; Peng, Stafford & Talbert, 1977). Peng, Stafford, and Talbert, using data from the National Longitudinal Study for the graduating class of 1972, investigated students' self-esteem and locus of control. With respect to locus of control, the researchers found that it was highly correlated with ability for both Black and white students throughout their academic careers. Blacks' internal locus of control was less than that of whites -- a gap that widened as the group moved from grade to grade. Peng and other researchers attributed their findings to the ascription of failure by minorities to events beyond their control.

The findings from studies conducted on the self-esteem and locus of control of minority students suggest that minority students in non-urban schools may develop their self-esteem and perceive their locus of control in ways that work against their acceptance of school values and participation in important school activities. In essence, these students are interested in and confident about achieving goals established by their peers who share the same culture. However, their perception of the worth of the school's values and of their ability to control or effect positive outcomes in school is low.

Intellectual Development

The previous sections described factors that influence two of three characteristics attributed to minority students in non-urban schools: resisting engagement in academic activities, and attaching less value to education than their white peers. Intellectual development, the topic of this section, directly influences a third characteristic: achieving at a rate much lower than that of their white peers.

Intellectual development for minority students appears to be highly influenced by the students' level of prior learning and the way they process information. Several reports describe the level of prior learning for minority students. They cite major academic deficiencies and the existence of a gap between minority students and those in the dominant culture on achievement and levels of educational attainment (Valdivieso, 1985; Darling-Hammond, 1985). Research studies report a positive relationship between students' prior learning and their achievement (Bloom, 1976; Bracht & Hopkins, 1972). Bloom concluded that as much as 80 percent of the variance in posttest scores may be accounted for by pretest scores alone. Bracht and Hopkins report that

about two-thirds of the variance in eleventh grade achievement was predictable from third grade achievement.

These findings foretell serious problems for low-achieving minority students who are engaged in instructional activities with their peers in the dominant culture. While able students are prepared for instruction and can engage in a critical event of instruction that Gagne (1980) calls "stimulating recall of prerequisite learnings," low-achieving students cannot. "Stimulating recall of prerequisite learnings" refers to the notion that new learning is strongly influenced by old learning.

A second variable related to achievement is the students' processing of information. This includes acquisition of basic skills and the use of higher-order thinking skills. Several research studies and articles have been written on these topics. Four of those studies are cited here. The first two (Blum and Spangehl, 1982; Feuerstein, Rand, Hoffman & Miller, 1980) suggest that minority students don't use higher-order thinking skills in a significant way in their academic work. According to Blum and Spangehl (1982):

> The activity of academic inquiry is foreign to them; they cannot define a problem; the notion of proof, evidence, or research methods appropriate to a problem are not part of their thought processes or modes of operating in the educational setting. They are not self-directed learners (Miles, 1980, p. 11).

Feuerstein and others, whose initial work focused on low SES students, report that disadvantaged students are retarded performers who have a passive and dependent cognitive style accompanied by low scholastic achievement. Their style is in contrast to that of other learners who are autonomous and independent thinkers. They attribute their learning style and level of adaptation to the lack or inefficient use of those functions that are prerequisite to adequate thinking. Feuerstein and others contend that the

English language. Furthermore, it is not just "bad" English. Howard Mims, an associate professor at Cleveland State University, stated that: "A teacher has to understand [that] it isn't just a matter of a child's leaving s's off words when he conjugates a verb. It's programmed in his head like a computer: third person singular doesn't have an s (Orr, 1987, p. 10)." According to Orr, BEV reduces the level of effective communication the Black student has with teachers and with majority peers.

The work of Feuerstein and others, Gilbert and Gay, Orr, and Blum and Spangehl suggests that some minority students are handicapped with respect to the learning process because they don't make significant use of higher-order thinking skills, and their learning styles and use of English are often different from that of the majority culture. This handicap is reflected in their poor academic achievement in school.

cognitive style of the disadvantaged student can be modified. Feuerstein developed a strategy for redeveloping the cognitive structure of the retarded performer, called Instrumental Enrichment.

The third study (Gilbert & Gay, 1985) provides another perspective on why minority students don't use thinking skills or acquire basic skills as their white peers do. Gay and Gilbert contend that the achievement and intellectual development of some minority students are deficient because the conditions and attitudes necessary for their learning do not exist. They believe that the preferred learning styles of minority students are different from those of their white peers and that the difficulties in making the transitions from the home environment to those of the school have adversely affected minority student intellectual development. They describe the learning styles of Black students as follows:

> The learning styles of black children tend to be relational and field-dependent. This means that they tend to function better in cooperative, informal and loosely structured environments, in which students and teachers work closely together to achieve common goals. The learning itself should focus on concepts and general principles - getting an overall feel for a task - rather than on minutiae. Black children tend to work together for the benefit of the group. The pace of the learning effort is set more by the movement of the group than by some arbitrarily determined time allocated for the completion of an instructional task. Achievement results from individual, and often competitive, efforts. Primarily, attention in instruction is given to factual details and in evaluation, to personal performance. Recognition and rewards are given for the quality of the completed task rather than for the effort expended (p. 134).

A fourth study by Eleanor Orr (1987) reports possible barriers to minority students' acquisition of knowledge. According to Orr, there is a Black English Vernacular (BEV) that exists for some Black students. In BEV, students make non-standard use of certain prepositions and conjunctions. BEV also consists of vocabulary and grammar that are different from the standard

Summary and Implications

This paper discussed three factors that may influence the achievement of minority students, and alluded to behaviors and attitudes of minority students that may be influenced by those factors in a non-urban school environment. One conclusion of the paper is that minority students in non-urban and urban schools are quite similar in how they are influenced by their cultural values, the way they develop self-esteem and locus of control, and the way they process information. However, they differ significantly in the way they cope with the culture of school and that of their classmates. Non-urban minority students, unlike their urban peers, are in a school where the culture, values, and attitudes of most of their classmates and teachers may be radically different from those of the minority students.

Non-urban schools are being accused of failing to meet the needs of the low-achieving minority students. This accusation results from the perception that they are neglecting their minority students, as evidenced by the over-representation of minority students in special education classes, their under-representation in academic courses and honor societies, and their under-representation in school activities in general.

Non-urban schools can better meet the challenge of educating minority students by reorienting the thinking of their staffs, and developing strategies and programs that deal with the factors discussed above. They must recognize that achievement problems of minority students in non-urban schools are influenced by these factors: cultural values; self-esteem and the level of control over the environment; and tools for learning and the way they process information.

Some strategies and programs for meeting this challenge have already been developed and are being implemented by educators in non-urban schools. These approaches help create environments that are more accepting of the different cultures and values of minority students in non-urban schools. Some selected strategies and programs being used in non-urban schools or that have been used successfully with minority students are as follows:

Strategies

- Increasing the participation and presence of minority role models in school activities.
- Finding ways to reward minority students for their accomplishments without simply rewarding them because they are minorities.
- Involving parents, interested teachers, and minority role models in discussions of minority student problems and concerns as they relate to school values and goals.
- Providing staff development for teachers to increase their awareness of minority cultures.
- Designing classroom activities that have the more able students assisting their less able peers.
- Providing staff development for teachers on ways to help all students master higher-order thinking skills.
- Developing tutoring centers that are closely aligned with a specific course.
- Developing strategies that include instructional activities for both the more and less able students.

Programs

- The Efficacy Committee, Inc. is a series of seminars and activities that focuses on changing individual attitudes and self-perceptions, providing role models and performance training techniques, and evidencing concern about a student's intellectual development. Based on a psychological theory of performance, this program aims to narrow the gap in intellectual performance between Black and white students by assessing the low achievers' needs, introducing them to the prerequisites for success in the general society, and encouraging their support of fellow students. The program's approach emphasizes societal interaction variables; ability and performance-related behaviors;

responsibility for outcomes; development of self-assurance; and the significance of intellectual development for the minority student's future.

The program was developed in 1974 by Jeff and Anita Howard, The Efficacy Committee, Inc., 297 Broadway, Arlington, MA 02174.

- Higher Order Thinking Skills (HOTS) is a computer-based thinking activity, designed in accordance with theories of cognitive development, and focused on problem-solving. The program regards linkages among ideas and facts as the most important element of problem-solving. HOTS is designed to help low achieving students organize information and develop the linkages necessary for problem-solving. Language skills are emphasized along with information processing skills such as self-monitoring, reviewing strategies, articulating results, contextual inferring, and evaluating information from a variety of sources.

  HOTS was developed by Stanley Pogrow, University of Arizona, College of Education, Tucson, AZ 95721.

- Foundations for Learning recognizes the relationship between the failure of minority students and their limited command of language. The program provides a model for alleviating such problems as content and method of learning, professional redevelopment of teachers, and strategies of implementation and change. The program features a holistic assessment of student progress with an integrated content and process-based approach to all language domains. Aspects of reasoning, problem-solving, and critical thinking are emphasized. The objective of the program is to have the teacher direct the classroom in a manner to promote learning, persuasion and leadership through language.

  Dr. Arthur E. Thomas provided the leadership that led to the creation of Foundations for Learning. The present chairman for the group is Warren Rovetch, Foundations for Learning: Language, 570 Highland Avenue, Boulder, CO 80302.

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